

'Bon Odori' Dance to Be Held By Japanese Here on Sunday

A colorful "Bon Odori" will be held Sunday evening on the streets in front of the Oakland Japanese Buddhist Church at Sixth and Jackson Streets here.

More than 200 Japanese men, women, boys and girls in colorful Oriental costumes will take part. Hundreds of colored lanterns will be hung along the street, like so many large twinkling fire-flies, officials said.

In case you didn't know, a "Bon Odori" is a festival or celebration. In this case the celebration, which is open to the public, takes the form of a street dance, the first ever to be given in Oakland, according to members of the Buddhist Church here.

FOLK DANCES

More than 20 different folk dances will be given during the evening. Of these, the dancers will sing the chorus to most, as they dance. Four will be sung during the entire dance, to the accompaniment of Japanese music.

Among the petite little "Cherry Blossom" girls who will take part in the festivities will be Misses Flora Kawamoto, Yoneko Arakawa, Sachiko Yamane and Yasuko Tani. They have been trained by two capable dancing instructors, Mrs. Koraku Yamane and Mrs. Tase Nakayama. Henry T. Kawamoto will have charge of the festival.

An ancient legend, nearly ob-

scured in antiquity, is pointed to by members of the Japanese church as the origin of the quaint celebration.

More than 2500 years ago, so the legend goes, a very greedy woman lived in China. When she died, she "went to the place where all bad people go." It was very uncomfortable. When she tried to drink some cooling water, it "turned to molten metal" in her mouth.

Her son, Mokuren, a disciple of Buddha, was grieved at her torture. He appealed to Buddha to help his mother, was told to get a number of priests, and make large sacrificial offerings, that possibly his mother's sufferings might be eased.

After all had been done, exactly as suggested by Buddha, the quaint tale goes, the mother was released from her suffering.

FESTIVAL KEPT ALIVE

In great happiness, the son held a huge festival, with large quantities of food and drink and music. The populace took part with him in the celebration of his mother's good fortune. To this day the custom has persisted, Japanese say. The festivities Sunday night, however, also are a celebration of "the return of the dead" and really are in thanksgiving that members of the church have been saved "from having to go through the torture of the ancient woman."

TRIBUNE MAR 25 1939

BUDDHISTS TO CONVENE FRIDAY IN NEW TEMPLE

In a new \$80,000 Buddhist Temple where part of the ashes of Buddha are enshrined in a gold and crystal container, 1000 young American Buddhists, representing approximately 180,000 members of their religion in North America, will meet here March 31 for their first National convention.

The shrine and ashes of Buddha, which have become a point of veneration for Buddhists throughout America, were presented to the temple by the erstwhile King Prajadhipok of Siam through ex-Bishop K. Masuyama.

Oakland Buddhist Church Planning 'Bon' Festival

TRIB D AUG 21 1949

The Oakland Buddhist Church will stage its annual "Bon" festival—a religious fete which originated more than 2500 years ago—today at 2 p.m. at the local temple, 181 Sixth Street.

According to the Rev. Gyoyu Hirabayashi, director of the church, the religious ceremony will begin with prayers and special rites in the afternoon, then continue through the evening with a program of folk dancing and other entertainment.

Plans call for Sixth Street to be blocked off between Jackson and Madison Streets for the "Bon"

dance festival, beginning at 7:30 p.m.

Garbed in colorful kimonos, more than 200 men, women and children will take part in 14 different folk dances. Hundreds of lanterns will be hung along the street for the occasion.

The festival, which in accordance with Buddhist legend dates back to 565 B.C., will be open to the public, according to the Reverend Hirabayashi.

Bon Matsuri or "Memorial Festival," which is observed by all Buddhist Churches, consists of a memorial service for all the deceased, and the Bon Odori. The

legendary reason for the "Bon" dances comes from a story of the greedy and stingy mother of a disciple of Buddha. When she died, her spirit suffered for her earthly sins of greed, and so she appealed to her son for help. He went to the Buddha and was told to hold a great feast in her memory and feed everyone generously. He did so, and when her spirit became free, he danced with joy. The Bon Matsuri is sometimes called the Feast of Lanterns from the ancient custom of placing lanterns on the graves so as to light the way back for the spirits.

Church Property Given for Freeway

During a luncheon meeting of state and church officials today, the Buddhist Church of Oakland formally transferred title to its present property at 181 Sixth Street to the State Division of Highways.

To make the space available for the new freeway project, the church will be moved to Ninth and Jackson Streets. Moving operations, slated to start at the end of January, and subsequent renovations to the building are expected to take three

months.

Mitsuteru Nakashima, president of the church board, presided at today's luncheon session at the Villa de la Paix. Invited to attend and take part in the program were members of the board and a group of state highway officials led by John S. Daniels, department head of the right-of-way section for District No. 4 with headquarters in San Francisco.

Wednesday to Be 'Moving Day' For Buddhist Church Here

TRIB D MAR 12 1950

Wednesday will be "moving day" for the Buddhist Church, 181 Sixth Street, believed to be the biggest building ever "transplanted" here.

The structure will be the first large building removed from a block-wide strip of land between Fifth and Sixth Streets from Broadway to Fallon Street, purchased by the State Division of Highways as right-of-way for the Eastshore Freeway.

TO HALVE CHURCH

As part of a "removal, relocation and rehabilitation" project to cost more than \$100,000, the church building will be cut in half and moved in sections from its present site at Sixth and Jackson Streets to a new location three blocks away.

Preparation of the future site on the southwest corner at Ninth and Jackson Streets has been under way for the past three months.

Because of its mammoth proportions, the moving project will require extremely precise timing. According to present plans, the first "half" of the building will start on its three-block journey at 9 a.m. Wednesday.

MATTER OF TIMING

If advance calculations prove correct, that section will arrive at the new location the same day. At least, that's the hope of officials of the Myers Construction Company of El Cerrito and the R. B. Montgomery house moving firm of Oakland, which will collaborate in the overall project. The second half of the building will follow about a week later.

Because of the tremendous size of each section of the building—the halves will be about 50 feet high, 100 feet long, and 65 feet wide—the moving operation involves numerous problems.

As it rolls slowly up Jackson street, each section will fill not only the street itself, but most of the sidewalk area. This fact has forced removal of trees and light poles from the church's path.

TO RAISE WIRES

The height of the building will make it necessary to raise electric and telephone wires out of the way as the sections pass up the street.

To clear the path for the church, the main trunk lines of the utility systems must be severed at the

intersections to be crossed, according to Cecil Myers, construction company official. Special arrangements are being made by both Pacific Gas and Electric Company and the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company to provide residents in the area continuous service during the moving project, he said.

Advance planning for the operation, which because of its size required independent engineering, was guided by the J. Y. Long Company representatives. Various departments of the City of Oakland are co-operating with the movers, Myers said.

Arrangements for the church's part in the relocation project are under the direction of Mitsutera Nakashima, president of the church board, and the Rev. Gyoyu Hirabayashi.

Buddhists Move Into New Church

The Buddhist Church of Oakland—moved in two sections from 181 Sixth street to 825 Jackson street—will be formally reopened during ceremonies Saturday and Sunday.

Ceremonies Saturday will start at 8 p. m. and will be followed by

a dance at 9 p. m. in the church auditorium.

Sunday events will include a religious ceremonial parade at noon from the old site to the new one, a commemoration service at 2 p. m., a banquet at 4 p. m. and a program of entertainment at 7 p. m., according to Church President Mitsuteru Nakashima.

The 2 p. m. service will have as guest speaker Bishop Enryo Shigefuji of San Francisco, national head of the church.

Improvements to the church including a new heating and air conditioning system were installed after the church was moved through contributions of \$35,000 by its members.

Moving operations started last March 15 following negotiations during which the State Division of Highway paid the church \$105,100 in order to extend the Eastshore Freeway through the old site.

The auditorium was severed and moved to the new location first. The remainder of the church was moved two weeks later. Moving operations were conducted by the Myers Construction Company of El Cerrito.

Buddhist Church Reopens Doors

TRIB D JUN 30 1958

The newly painted and air-conditioned Buddhist Church of Oakland will be reopened at its new Ninth and Jackson Street location with programs tomorrow and Sunday.

Moved from its old location, Sixth and Jackson Streets, to make way for the East Shore Freeway extension at a cost of \$105,100, improvements to the church were made possible by the contribution of \$35,000 from its members, according to President Mitsuteru Nakashima.

Bishop E. Shigefuji, of San Francisco, will be the guest speaker featured for the occasion at 8 p.m. tomorrow. The Rev. K. Kumata, of Los Angeles, will address the meeting of the congregation. At 9 p.m. the floor of the church auditorium will be cleared for a dance with Maurice Anger's orchestra. Sunday at 12 noon a religious ceremonial parade will start at the old site and proceed to the present location

where appropriate ceremonies will follow. At 2 p.m. Bishop Shigefuji will speak and at 4 p.m. a banquet will take place in the church auditorium.

The program will conclude with a special entertainment at 7 p.m. in the church auditorium featuring Japanese Odori's, which are native dances, and many other types of acts.

Oakland Buddhist Church Oakland, California

Buddhist Churches of America:
75-YEAR HISTORY, 1899-1974
ed. by Ryo Munekata.
Hobart, Chicago, 1974.

THE BEGINNING

At the turn of the 20th Century, some early Japanese immigrants had crossed the San Francisco Bay to the east, and settled in the area called Oakland and its nearby towns. As the Japanese population in the East Bay increased, there developed needs and desires not only physical but also spiritual in nature. They wanted a place where they were able to meet and greet each other and to make new acquaintances.

Many of these Japanese immigrants were in their late teens or twenties and with the growing complexities of their lifestyle in this new land, the spiritual aspects were felt to be their strongest needs. They gathered together to worship their own religious faith, Buddhism which was brought with them from Japan.

In early 1901, these young Issei began not only to meet informally, but regularly for religious worship in gratitude and thanksgiving. They were able to obtain the services of Rev. Tetsuei Mizuki, from the San Francisco church to come once a month and conduct the services. They were again able to hear the Teachings of the Buddha. Rev. Mizuki continued to serve the East Bay Buddhists until he took ill the same year in the Summer. Then, Rev. Kakuryo Nishijima, also of San Francisco continued to officiate at the monthly services.

These services were greeted with ever increasing and enthusiastic followers. The enthusiasm generated by the group culminated in the creation and organization of a group that was later to become the Oakland Buddhist Church by the end of 1901.

Oakland Buddhist Church
Constructed—1927



MENT OF ORGANIZATIONS

In September, 1903, the group rented a house on Sixth Street and formed the Oakland Young Men's Buddhist Association. In the "Hokubei Kaikyo Enka-kushi" published by the Buddhist Mission of North America in 1936, six men, Tahara, Ryokaku, Murakami, Yamasaki, Okakura and Ikeda were the leaders who were instrumental in organizing the group. Once a month services were continued and, added to this, were weekly study classes.

In the following year, March 28, 1904, the Fujinkai was organized, and on July 18, 1904, the first Oakland Japanese Language School was also established.

In May, 1905, the Church welcomed its first resident minister, Rev. Mokuji Fujii. With the presence of a minister, the enthusiasm of the members to support the Church became greater. Then, in the following year in April, 1906, coupled with the tragic San Francisco Earthquake, many of the immigrants moved to the East Bay to settle in Oakland. The result was a great increase in its membership.

In September, 1906, the Church first relocated to 71 Sixth Street, but, with the increasing membership, they later moved to a larger house on 313 Sixth Street.

In 1911, the group was officially incorporated as a church under the laws of the State of California.



Hanamatsuri—1916

In June, 1920, with the Oakland Buddhists looking towards the future, and with the increase in children of the Issei, the Nisei, Rev. Ryugyo Fujimoto established the first Sunday School organization.



Sunday School—1921



Church Members—1922

CONSTRUCTION OF CHURCH BUILDING

The Church was again to experience the need for larger quarters and a more permanent place. In February, 1923, the property on the corner of Sixth and Jackson Streets was purchased.

With the purchase of this property and through the initiative and leadership of Kikutaro Nakashima, church construction project was initiated. With the members giving of their time, effort and money, the Church was completed and officially dedicated on October 5, 1927.

This Church, a two-story building, was located a short distance from the heart of the City of Oakland and within walking distance to the famous Lake Merritt. The Church, somewhat similar to a Japanese temple architecture, was unique in structure, and possibly, the first of its kind to be built in the East Bay.

OTHER CHURCH ACTIVITIES

Along with this newly built Church, other changes were also initiated. With increase in Sunday School attendance, various age groups were organized to meet the needs of its members. The older Sunday School students organized in April, 1926. It was a club called Lumbini, similar to the Junior YBA group of today.



Lumbini Girls Club—1927



Lumbini Boys Club—1927

The Japanese Language School program was re-organized in 1925 under the name of Wanto Gakuen. It was renamed Showa Gakuen in 1928.

With the YMBA already in existence, in July, 1928, the Young Women's Buddhist Association (YWBA) was organized.

The year, 1929, was tragic for the Church. A fire destroyed the adjacent wooden building and a new structure had to be built. This new structure called the YMWBA Building, contained five classrooms, a Judo hall, a shower room, a kitchen, a meeting room and a residence for the minister.

In 1930, the Junior YWBA was organized, followed in 1932 by the formation of the Junior YMBA.

In the 1930's the YMBA and the YWBA began to actively participate in the local Bay District and California Young Buddhist League. Many of the members took active part in the various organizations and leagues. Some members, to mention a few of the active leaders were: Tony Yokomizo, Tad Tani, Mitsuteru Nakashima, John Koyama, Tad Hirota, Noboru Yorichi, Nobuye Tani, Sakaye Adachi, Hanako Yoshiooka, Shizue Masuda and Haruye Hirai.



YWBA—1930's



YMBA—1930's

The Church from this time to the present began an active sports program for the youth; basketball, baseball, midget baseball, football, ping pong, judo, and kendo are just a few of the activities available along with a strong religious program.

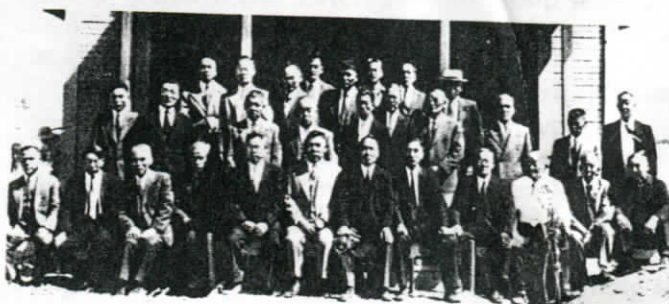
In the history of the Church's sports program, the name of Mr. and Mrs. Cos Loustalot stands out as a couple who had dedicated so much to the program. For their many services and unselfish devotion to the Church, they were honored on the occasion of the 70th Anniversary of the Church.



Board of Directors—1935



Oakland Fujinkai at Topaz Relocation Center—1945



Oakland Issei Men at Topaz Relocation Center—1945

CHURCH EVACUATED DURING WAR

At the outbreak of World War II, many of the members had to move out from the Church area as the area was designated in the Red Zone. This Red Zone was a restricted area to all Japanese.

During the entire evacuation period, the Church was used to store the many belongings of the evacuated families and members. The Church was fortunate to have the services of Cos Loustalot watching and caring for the Church during the war years. His thoughtfulness extended during this time of crisis and was greatly appreciated by the Church and its membership.

The members were first sent to the Tanforan Assembly Center in San Bruno, California, and other families voluntarily evacuated from the Bay Area to Northern and Central California areas and as far away as the State of Utah. From Tanforan the church members were moved to the concentration camp in Topaz, Utah.

After the release of the evacuees, and as the West Coast was once again open to the Japanese, many families returned and resettled again in the Bay Area. Rev. Gibun Kimura, the first postwar minister, worked hard to rebuild and reorganize the Church.

With more families returning, the various organizations were reorganized and new clubs were also formed. The YBA was first to reorganize in the latter part of 1946. The teaching staff, the Sunday School Department and Sunday services were also reactivated.

CHURCH RELOCATED

With the construction of the Nimitz Freeway in 1950, the Church had to be relocated three blocks northward to a new location on Ninth and Jackson Streets. Arrangements were made with the State of California to move the church building to the new location.

On July 1 and 2, 1950, an official celebration and opening of the Church was held at its new location. The property adjacent to the Church, an apartment building, was purchased by the Church for possible future expansion if necessary.

The Issei Church Board members realized that sooner or later they must relinquish the duties of the Church to the Nisei. So from the year 1951, the Church Board was composed entirely by Nisei with the Issei still actively participating by serving as advisors to the Board.

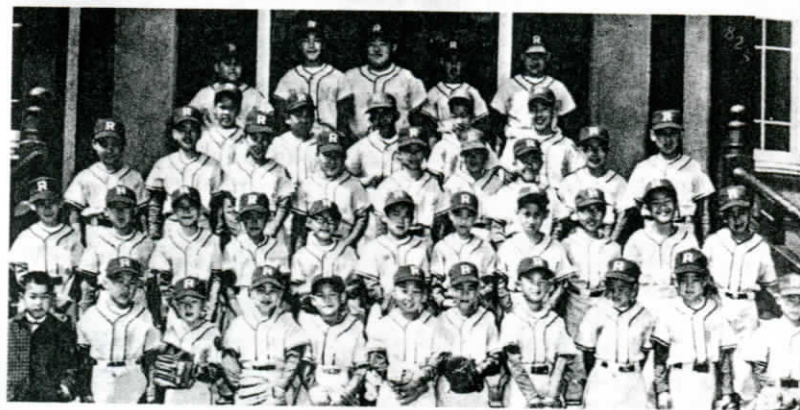
OTHER ORGANIZATION ESTABLISHED

Soon other organizations began to be re-established: for example, the Oakland Buddhist Nihongo Gakuen was established in 1951. Newer organizations were also formed. The Oakland Junior Fujinkai was organized in 1953, and has since become one of the most active and busiest groups in the Church.

As time rapidly progressed, the Church celebrated its 60th Anniversary on October 14 and 15, 1961. This two-day affair was very colorful and memorable, culminating in a banquet and entertainment held at Goodman Hall in Jack London Square.

The Church Youth Club was organized in 1962 for those of Sunday School age and older. Currently, the youth are participating in various sports events, educational and family group projects and activities. The Youth Club is called the "Oakland Rams" and at present actively participates in the East Bay Basketball Boys and Girls League. The group has 7 teams—4 boys and 3 girls teams represented in this league. They also participate in the Golden Gate Optimist's

Baseball Division—"Pee Wee" and "Hardball" Leagues.



Youth Club Baseball Team—1963

Each year a "Family Fun Night" is sponsored by the Youth Planning Committee and over 150 adults, students and children participate in volleyball, basketball, ping pong, badminton and other individual active games.

A newly organized and popular activity is the "Karate Club". Rev. Zuikei Taniguchi is the teacher and at present, over 60 students and adults are participating.

Through the efforts of Rev. Kenyu Masuyama, Buddhist organizations were also established in the Concord, Orinda, Walnut Creek and Martinez areas.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Working closely with the Tamori family of Concord, and using the donated facilities, a Sunday School was started in this area with the assistance of Fumi Tsuboi and Yoshio Isono from the Sunday School Department. Later, an adult group was organized as the "Concord Howakai" and is very active today.

The Sunday School group in Hayward, Ashland, San Lorenzo and San Leandro areas were also organized by Rev. K. Masuyama during this time. For these children, it was much more convenient to have their Sunday School services on Saturday morning. The Ashland Sunday School is still active and the English speaking minister is conducting morning services on Saturdays.



Issei Memorial Building Dedication—1962

1962, the Issei Memorial Building was dedicated. The Issei pioneers were honored at this affair and a colorful Chigo parade was held. This building has 7 classrooms, a social hall and a kitchen. It is used mainly by the Sunday School and the Japanese Language School.

In 1966, the Church honored all active and non-active Sunday School teachers since their reorganization in 1946. Setsuko Kimura and Yoshio Isono received from the Church an award for 20 years or more service to the Sunday School.

The Church was very fortunate to have the services of Mrs. Helen Iwanaga. Mrs. Iwanaga was not only instrumental in improving the Sunday School Department and religious services, but her talents in music made possible the creation of the first Oakland Buddhist Church Choir. The choir participated in major services, Bay Area Buddhist affairs and conferences and the Western Young Buddhist League Choir Festival. Mrs. Iwanaga also instigated the first Children's Choir of the Oakland Sunday School Department.

THE CHURCH TODAY

In 1971, the Church celebrated its 70th Anniversary. Recognizing and honoring all of the past and present ministers and pioneers of the Church. This two-day gala affair started with a Chigo parade, services, a banquet and a dance. Over 700 members, guests and friends participated in this celebration.



Fujinkai members—1971

The Church now has over twelve (12) active, organized groups providing activities for all ages. The most active groups are the Junior and Senior Fujinkai with over a hundred members and the Junior YBA, with over seventy-five members.

The Church Board of Directors of 1972, decided that all Church members of age 75 or over shall be recognized as "Honorary Church Members".

The Oakland Buddhist Church is presently located on Ninth and Jackson Streets. It is located near the Civic Center of Oakland, within a few blocks of the Oakland Museum, and just west of the "BART" system—Oakland's rapid transit station. The Church is cooperating with the Oakland Parks Department in planning for a park across the street from the Church,

that will be completed in the Fall of 1973.

MINISTERS AND PRESIDENTS

Ministers and years served:

Mokujo Fujii	(1905-1911)
Tatsugen Fukushima	(1911)
Gyodo Haguri	(1911-1917)
Kohan Akita	(1915-1919)
Ryugyo Fujimoto	(1920)
Tassho Noryo	(1920)
Doshun Mizutani	(1920-1913)
Taigan Hata	(1923-1926)
Kenshi Iwao	(1926-1927, 1929-1931)
Shoi Yamada	(1927-1928)
Masao Washioka	(1927-1932)
Tokumon Aoki	(1932-1933)
Hideo Shimakawa	(1933-1939)
Eiyu Terao	(1938-1940)
Tetsuro Kashima	(1936-1945)
Gibun Kimura	(1946-1948)
Gyoyu Hirabayashi	(1949-1958)
Kenyu Masuyama	(1954-1968)
Keisho Motoyama	(1956-1957)
Hiroshi Futaba	(1950-1952)
Sensho Inouye	(1960-1963)
Haruo Yamaoka	(1964-1971)
Zesei Kawasaki	(1969-present)
Zuikai Taniguchi	(1971-present)

Presidents and years served:

Jitsuo Tani	(1926)
Torasaburo Masuda	(1927-1928)
Motoemon Yokomizo	(1935)
Kikutaro Nakashima	(1939)
Jitsuo Tani	(1940)
Suematsu Kitagaki	(1941)
Mitsuteru Nakashima	(1942, 1951-1952)
Motomu Yokomizo	(1953)
Shinobu Tani	(1954)
Torao Neishi	(1955)
Tadashi Hirota	(1956)
Tadashi Nakamura	(1957)
Goro Endo	(1958)
Ted Sakaki	(1959)
Eichi Nakazono	(1960)
Harry Katayama	(1961)
Yoshio Oto	(1962)
George Yokoyama	(1963)
Eiichi Yoshida	(1964)
Shizuo Tanaka	(1965)
Mamoru Hirota	(1966)
Shigenobu Kuramoto	(1967)
Roy Endo	(1968)
Mitsugi Neishi	(1969)
Harry Kurotori	(1970)
Miles Suda	(1971)
Yoshio Isono	(1972)
Akira Nakamura	(1973)

(History Committee: Yoshio Isono — chairman)